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Governor



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GOVERNOR EASLEY DECLARES SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK: **STATEWIDE TORNADO DRILL PLANNED MARCH 13th**

RALEIGH – While the phrase “duck and cover” was a well-known term during the fallout shelter days of the Cold War, the action of seeking shelter could still have life-saving meaning in the face of an approaching tornado. As North Carolina again moves into tornado season, it’s important that all citizens be reminded of the potential for severe weather in our state, and how to protect themselves and their family from danger.

Therefore, Governor Easley has declared March 10-16, 2002, to be “Severe Weather Awareness Week” in North Carolina. A statewide tornado drill will be conducted on March 13th.

“Tornadoes can be more dangerous than other types of severe weather because they can strike at any time with little warning,” said Bryan Beatty, Secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety. “The public needs to learn now what they can do to take immediate protective action, because when a tornado threatens, it’s too late to look for information.”

As part of Severe Weather Awareness Week, schools, businesses and state government agencies across the state are invited to take part in the annual tornado drill scheduled for Wednesday morning, March 13th. In case of actual severe weather on March 13th, the drill will be held on Friday, March 15th. The North Carolina Emergency Management Division, the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Department of Public Instruction sponsor the awareness week in North Carolina.

The National Weather Service (NWS) says the first step in protecting yourself from severe weather is to listen for weather watches and warnings. These are issued by the NWS and broadcast by local radio and TV stations. A **WATCH** means weather conditions are favorable for the development of a particular weather event, such as tornadoes, heavy thunderstorms, hail, or high winds. A **WARNING** means that particular type of weather event is occurring and you should take immediate protective action.

Severe weather most often occurs in the spring and summer months when two weather systems collide. Weather systems that are only a few degrees different in temperature or a few millibars different in pressure can result in violent winds, hail, thunderstorms and even tornadoes.

“Preparedness does save lives. Having an emergency plan can reduce death and injury,” said Eric Tolbert, Director of North Carolina Emergency Management. “We want everyone to be prepared.”

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2002 Severe Weather Awareness Week

Page 2

Here are some tips for what to do before severe weather strikes and warnings are issued:

- ? ? Develop an emergency plan for you and your family.
- ? ? Prepare a disaster supplies kit.
- ? ? Have frequent drills.
- ? ? Know your location in relationship to the movement of storms.
- ? ? Have a NOAA Weather Radio with battery back-up.

All North Carolina's counties are subject to experiencing thunderstorms, lightning, hail, flash floods, high winds and micro bursts, and the most violent of all weather events, tornadoes. Emergency Management officials urge people not to wait until a severe storm **watch** or **warning** is issued before assembling their emergency kit. An emergency kit can be kept in a portable container, such as a plastic crate, duffle bag or backpack. It should be stored in an interior closet, basement, or other accessible safe place.

Your family's emergency supplies kit should include:

- ? ? Water, about one gallon per person per day
- ? ? Enough canned or non-perishable food for the family to last three to seven days
- ? ? A hand operated can opener
- ? ? Battery powered radio and extra fresh batteries
- ? ? Flashlight and extra batteries
- ? ? First aid kit
- ? ? Necessary prescription drugs
- ? ? Some extra cash
- ? ? Games and reading materials to help pass the time

When a **Tornado WATCH** is issued, you should:

- ? ? Stay tuned to a local radio or television station or listen to NOAA Weather Radio.
- ? ? Secure any loose objects outdoors or move them inside.
- ? ? Survey your immediate surroundings for the most suitable shelter.
- ? ? Be alert for changing weather conditions. Tornadoes can occur in conjunction with thunderstorms that also produce severe hail.

If a **Tornado WARNING** is issued, or you have an indication that a tornado may be approaching, **TAKE COVER IMMEDIATELY**. The safest place in a home is in an interior room on the lowest level of the home, away from windows. This may be a bathroom, interior closet or under a stairway. People in tall buildings should take shelter in interior hallways, away from windows. Stay away from vehicles. Do not try to outrun a tornado. Leave your mobile home and seek shelter in a sturdy building, or low-lying area. If outside, take cover in a ditch, but be mindful of possible flooding.

Anyone who wants more information about severe weather in North Carolina can contact their County Emergency Management Agency, or visit the following web sites:

- N.C. Emergency Management at www.ncem.org
- U.S. National Weather Service at www.nws.noaa.gov
- American Red Cross at www.redcross.org